

Appendix D
Example of a Commander's Training
Philosophy and Guidance Letter

From: Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines,
2d Marine Division

To: Marines and Sailors of the Battalion

Subj: TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

1. Philosophy. Our number one priority is to train Marines for success in combat. Anything that detracts from this priority should be questioned. We must train hard to be hard. To be effective, training must have the commander's emphasis during the planning and execution stages. I expect commanders to be their unit's training officers; a task that will not be delegated. Training will be objective-oriented (mission performance standards [MPSs]/individual training standards [ITSs]), and it will reflect centralized planning and decentralized control. The quality of training is determined during the planning stage, that is where a commander's emphasis is best placed. We must be able to shoot, move, and communicate better and quicker than the enemy—quicker to the objective, quicker rounds on target, quicker decisionmaking, quicker recovery. To unhinge the enemy, we must be quicker than the enemy is; timing is everything on the battlefield. As such, our combat fitness and professional military education (PME)/tactical decision game (TDG) programs must be continuous. All leaders, from fire team leader up, must make the battalion's training motto a personal commitment:

*Let no Marine's ghost say he died because you failed
to train him or his leader.*

In peacetime, the purpose of commanders and their leaders is to train Marines. The purpose of my staff is to assist commanders in the planning of training and its execution. If my staff is focused elsewhere, they are wrong!

2. Training Environment

a. Our training focus will be on combat mission profiles and attaining combat proficiency. We worked hard from January to August to develop a combat capability, our task now is to sustain these skills—both individual and collective. All training should be performance-related and should include the following steps:

- Preparing and coordinating.
- Training orientation/instruction.
- Practical application.
- Testing and evaluation.
- Debriefing/critiquing.
- Re-training in weak areas.

Whenever possible, we must train in an environment that simulates the stress, fatigue, and confusion of combat. Commanders must provide a mechanism for feedback, from the lowest level possible, in order to improve training.

b. When ashore, the training environment will be fast-paced, physically-demanding, and reflect continuous combat-like operations. Delete administrative and bivouac situations during exercises—go to the field, get tactical, and stay tactical. We should employ force-on-force training when possible, but this needs to be controlled to prevent a cowboy mentality. Force-on-force training should create decisionmaking opportunities that accomplish/reinforce the training objectives, not to see who can “win”. All training (field, garrison, and range) should be either drill or scenario driven. We must push ourselves during training exercises (this will require a well-planned training schedule). At the end of every field exercise, we should be physically tired and have the feeling that every available minute of training time was fully used.

The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.

c. We must be positive and creative in our approach to training. Repetition is the only way to develop habits that will ensure the correct responses under fire. This can make for a boring training

environment unless we work hard at making training challenging and creative and promoting competition.

3. Marksmanship. My goal is that our battalion continues to be the best shooters in the division. To be effective in combat, we must be more accurate and quicker than the enemy. All marksmanship will be oriented first to accuracy and then to speed. Speed encompasses how quickly a target can accurately be engaged, a weapon can be re-loaded, or a downed weapon can be brought back into action. Blindfolded assembly and disassembly drills will continue to be a focus to ensure we can fight at night. The following is a breakdown of deployment/post-deployment marksmanship objectives:

a. During deployment:

Short-range course, monthly (day and night)
Squad automatic weapon (SAW)/machine gun
qualification courses, monthly
Sniper, 10 rounds weekly (ground and airborne
platforms)
All others as ammunition allows

b. Post-deployment:

Short-range course, quarterly (day and night)
SAW/machine gun qualification courses, quarterly
Sniper, 10 rounds weekly (predominately ground
platforms)
Shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon
(SMAW)/AT4, monthly
All others as ammunition allows

Continue to concentrate on sustaining our military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT) skills. Focus on the ship should be 50 yards and in, and focus ashore should be 50-300 yards. Use shoot/no shoot and friend/foe discriminating shooting drills to better prepare us for a peacetime rules of engagement (ROE) environment. Again, I see our most likely operating arena as urban, low to no light, restrictive ROE, and peacekeeping/peacemaking missions. Therefore, our live-fire should be oriented to this environment.

4. Orientation. In today's world of reduced budgets and competing priorities, we must make every round and

training dollar count. As such, every round must be scored and recorded, and every exercise must be a learning evolution. I want each training event constructively de-briefed during training (when possible) and at the completion of training. This is best done with all hands in an open forum that is honest, objective, and pulls no punches, but it must be constructive and instructive in nature. The object is for participants to critique themselves so that others can learn from their thoughts/reasoning/mistakes (much like the post exercise critiques at Amphibious Warfare School [AWS] or Infantry Officer's Course [IOC]). The success of such a program is fragile, and its success hinges on our ability to set the correct tone. If done properly, these sessions are educational, they do not embarrass or discredit a Marine in front of fellow Marines.

5. Fitness. We must be combat tough at all times. Therefore, combat fitness is our focus. For example, chin-ups and kips do not equate to a combat function; but dead-hang pull-ups directly equate to pulling yourself over a wall or through a window. We will focus on ruck runs, rope climbs, dead-hang pull-ups, double running of the obstacle course, distance swims, stretcher and buddy carries, crew-served weapons races, line training, and forced marches with full load. The following standards apply:

a. During deployment:

- Partial PFT (dead-hang pull-ups, sit-ups), weekly
- Line training multiple times a week
- Stretcher carries
- Rope climbing
- Weigh-ins, weekly
- Forced march (7-10 miles) during every exercise ashore
- Unit runs/cardiovascular workouts, daily
- Morning unit runs in port, daily
- 5,000 meters on a rowing machine in 20 minutes

b. Post-deployment:

- Partial PFT (dead-hang pull-ups, sit ups), weekly
- Line training multiple times a week
- 3-mile ruck run (45 lbs, no flak jacket or helmet), monthly

Running of obstacle course in 5 minutes, twice
monthly

Stretcher/buddy carries

Forced march (10-15 miles), monthly

Semi-annual PFT

1-mile swim (with safety boat and floatation),
monthly

Line training, weekly

We must replace the fat that I see with muscle. Our goal is to increase our upper body strength, decrease the fat around the waist line, and strive for greater load bearing endurance in all weather conditions.

Try hard to be hard, then stay hard.

6. Maintenance. Maintenance is a priority. We will accomplish maintenance through a combination of daily/weekly preventive maintenance and periodic 1- to 2-week maintenance standdown periods. Maintenance standdowns will be scheduled at the battalion level and will encompass all units. During these periods, all training will stop and a 100% effort will focus on detailed maintenance of weapons, vehicles, equipment, uniforms, and facilities. The goal of the standdown is to detail inspect every weapon, remove carbon and rust from every weapon, inventory all 782 gear for accountability and serviceability, fix all vehicles (this also includes rust removal and spot painting), inspect wall lockers for accountability and serviceability, inspect seasonal uniforms, refurbish facilities, and verify account inventories. Some of these efforts will require working party support and a detailed, coordinated plan. This period should also be used by trainers to look forward and add detail to the next quarter's training plan. If we do this quarterly, then we will be ready for the division commander's new "unannounced" Commanding General's Readiness Inspection Program.

7. Training Management. Great training events occur because someone took the time to plan and organize them. I hold commanders (not executive officers) personally responsible for the planning, organization, and execution of all their unit's training. Our two biggest training problems are: (1) training is not planned and organized prior to taking Marines to the field and (2) logistic support requests are a swag and do not support the training plan. In other words, no one has coordinated the two. Commanders are responsible for ensuring proper coordination between training plans, range requests, and logistic support requests. My staff is here to support, but do not waste their time, or mine, by submitting a disjointed, uncoordinated training plan. Nothing irritates me more than wasting our Marines' time because we have not properly planned. Finally, if it is on the training

schedule, it will be accomplished. I am the battalion training officer and all changes to the schedule will be approved by me. Accurate reporting of training is essential for getting credit for the great plans you develop. Commanders will ensure their XO/training NCO periodically reconciles local training records with the S-3 and with daily entries.

8. Professional Military Education/Tactical Decision Games. Our Marine Corps' formal schools do an excellent job of using case studies and TDGs to teach tactical decisionmaking. The Fleet Marine Force is traditionally the worst user of these valuable tools. We must pursue this intellectual stimulation if we are to develop a oneness in the way we think and act on the battlefield. These events will be conducted in friendly, nonthreatening environments designed to foster discussion, bold thinking, new ideas, and growth. I do not study history to learn historical facts and trivia. I study history to examine the leadership styles and decision-making processes used on battlefields of the past in order to determine what I would want to emulate/avoid on battlefields in the future. All PME and TDGs will conclude with a review of lessons learned. During deployment, we will continue to do two PMEs per month and a commander's TDG every two weeks. Once back at Camp Lejeune, we will endeavor to do a SNCO/officer PME quarterly and a commanders TDG monthly. These PMEs and TDGs should then be used at the company level for your junior leaders.

9. Schools. Upon our return to CONUS, I want this battalion to aggressively pursue opportunities provided by the schools (PME & MOS). In my opinion, there is no one who is too valuable that they cannot go to school. There are many NCOs and SNCOs who need their PME equivalent in order to be competitive for promotion and reenlistment. In today's environment, schools are no longer optional, we, as leaders, must force our enlisted to attend PME schools, whether they want to go or not. Beginning in April, PME quotas will be our #1 priority for NCOs and SNCOs. Every local school has drops/no shows on their convening date. Have Marines prepared, packed, and standing by to fill these vacancies. This is one way to take care of our Marines.

10. Family Readiness. One of our most valuable assets is our families. They are usually the first to make sacrifices and the last to complain; they have also, traditionally, been lowest priority on the totem pole. I want us to make each family in this battalion feel that their needs are important. I expect leaders at every level to know their Marines' families and the quality of their lifestyle. The battalion landing team (BLT) XO is the family readiness officer. The BLT XO, BLT SgtMaj, family service representative SNCO, and chaplain are prepared to assist any battalion family in need. I am available to charge the flagpole for all family members in this battalion, and I expect all commanders and the first sergeant to follow my lead.

11. Recreation. All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy. If my approach to training is followed, our Marines will be more than ready for some recreation. Companies should host periodic sports days or field meets to allow Marines to "let off some steam". The battalion will host a quarterly combat field meet to foster healthy competition between units. All such events will be centered around competition and physical activity. I fully encourage refreshments, but alcohol is not the focus. Camaraderie is not birthed at the bar over a beer, but at the bar comparing war stories of the toughest, most demanding event Marines have been through. If our training is as demanding as I want, our camaraderie will take care of itself.

12. Medical. We must maintain our deployability by supervising our dental and immunization statistics. These are two areas that easily get away from us if we are not careful. Task your senior corpsman to track both! When ashore, take advantage of opportunities to conduct stretcher carries. We must maintain our capability to move a litter 3-4 km at night over rough terrain without further damaging the patient, while providing adequate security.

13. Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical. I still want 12 hours of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) training each month. Onboard ship, I specifically task every Marine to conduct at least one, masked, three-hour drill doing their normal work-related functions (i.e., typing, maintenance of weapons/vehicles, assemble/disassemble of weapons, fast roping, shooting, etc.). We must become more comfortable and

confident in performing our duties while masked.

14. Individual Equipment. The following individual equipment items are required items for all hands:

- wrist watch
- wrist compass
- red lens flashlight
- whistle
- ear plugs

15. Marine Corps Institute. The continuing education of our Marines is critical to our success. Platoon sergeant and squad leader fitness reports should reflect how well these programs are being run. All Marines should be enrolled in at least one Marine Corps Institute (MCI) course. All sergeants and above should be enrolled in the appropriate PME course. The following MCI courses are mandatory for all Marines:

- Marine NCO
- Personal Finance
- Scouting and Patrolling

16. Training Goals and Objectives. Our training goals and objectives are as follows:

a. During deployment

(1) Shipboard

- Combat fitness
- Marksmanship (short-range, low-light, discriminating)
- Assemble/disassemble weapons drills
- MOUT
- TDGs on possible tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel(TRAP)/noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO)/reinforcement missions
- NBC
- PMEs

(2) Spanish amphibious landing exercise (PHIBLEX)

- Advance force operations with Spanish forces
- Co B(-) pre-assault raid
- Controlled force-on-force
- Offensive operations (mobile

screening/reconnaissance, helicopter operations, mechanized operations, deliberate attack, area defense, night patrolling)
Retrograde/withdrawal under pressure
Amphibious landing with scheduled waves and select on-call waves.
Fire support coordination exercise (FSCEX) with artillery, 81 mm, and close air support (CAS) (RW & FW)
Platoon live fire and maneuver
10-mile forced march

TRAP exercise
Dragon shoot
Fix broken vehicles

(3) Italian PHIBLEX

Platoon sustainment training
Cold weather sustainment training
Minimize live fire training

(4) NOBLE SHIRLEY XVI

Primary focus is live fire and combined-arms
training
Platoon and company live fire
Platoon and company live fire and maneuver
Mobile assault course for all company field
skills training (FST) (com-
bined-arms exercise [CAX] style, without
troops)
Long-range helicopter raid with each company
MOUT training at company level and below
Anti-tank training with appropriate weapons
systems
BLT combat field meet
Fix broken vehicles

(5) Out-chop

Washdown of all vehicles
Clean and inventory all 782 gear
Turn-in all training allowance pool (TAP)
equipment to supply
Maintenance standdown (vehicles and weapons)
BLT sports day/picnic

(6) TRANSLANT

Maintenance standdown
Post-deployment equipment and personnel
inspection prep
Air contingency battalion (ACB) prep
Organize for leave and schools

b. Post-deployment

(1) Pre-leave period

72 first weekend back
Maintenance standdown for post-deployment
equipment inspection
Set-up and fix-up new battalion area
Semiannual PFT
Post-deployment inspection
Officer/SNCO hail and farewell
Key volunteer appreciation dinner

(2) Post-deployment leave period

All hands simultaneously
Tentative dates (5-18 May)

(3) Post leave period

Final BLT run/formation
Chop R Btry, light armored reconnaissance
(LAR), assault amphibious vehicle
(AAV), combat engineer battalion (CEB) back to parent
com-
mands
Personnel shifts
Continue set-up and fix-up of new battalion
area
Battalion change of command
Rifle/pistol range details
Regiment guard
ACB
SNCO/officer staff ride to Fredericksburg